



Trans Alp Epic 2018

France

FAQ and Preparation Information

Ben Jones MTB Ltd

Web: www.benjonesmtb.com

E-mail: ben@benjonesmtb.com

If you have any questions which aren't covered by this FAQ please do not hesitate to contact us.

Where and when does this trip start and finish?

The *Trans Alp Epic* starts and finishes in Chamonix and runs Saturday to Saturday. You need to **arrive in Chamonix on Saturday** and **depart the following Saturday**. We stay in Chamonix on the Saturday you arrive and the following Friday evening (we drive you back from this trip's finish point in Alpe d'Huez). We ride from Sunday morning until Friday afternoon. We'll contact you with the address of our accommodation in Chamonix.

What's included in the Price?

- 7 Nights of Chalet or Hotel Accommodation in shared rooms (Sat-Sun)
- 7 High Quality Evening Meals (Sat-Sun)
- 7 Buffet Breakfasts (Sun-Sat)
- 6 Packed Lunches + Unlimited Trail Snacks (Sun-Fri)
- 6 Days of Guided Riding (Sun-Fri)
- All necessary lift passes and transport tickets
- Van Support - Your kit bag is moved each day and necessary uplifts/transport

What's not included in the Price?

- Transport to and from our start point: Chamonix, France
- Alcoholic and Soft Drinks in the Evenings

What is the maximum group size?

Our groups are a maximum of 7 riders. This is the largest group booking we can accept and the maximum number of riders on a trip.

Can I book as an individual?

Yes, and many of our customers do just that. By the end of the week you'll be sure to have a bunch of new riding buddies.

Is there an Itinerary?

Please see our website for a more detailed day by day route plan. The route may change slightly due to weather, forestry, road-closures etc. However, the accommodation is in the following locations:

- Chamonix, France
- Beaufort, France
- Courchevel, France
- Aussois, France
- Briançon, France

- La Grave, France
- Chamonix, France

Getting Here

Can I arrive a day or two early and/or leave a day or two late?

Our accommodation in Chamonix has some extra space and where possible we are more than happy to accommodate you before and after your trip, however, this is subject to availability. Please contact us for availability and pricing, or for alternative accommodation options in Chamonix.

What time should I aim to be in Chamonix on the arrival date?

The earliest you can get access to your room at our accommodation in Chamonix is 2pm on Saturday. You are welcome to arrive before this time, and you can drop off your bags and build your bikes in the workshop area. However, if you could please give our chalet staff some space to clean the chalet. We suggest you aim to arrive in Chamonix before around 5pm if at all possible - so if flying please try and aim for a flight that arrives into Geneva before around 3pm. This gives you time to build your bike and relax before we meet at 7.30pm for our evening meal followed by an introductory chat. We will send you more specific arrival instructions before your trip.

Which airport should I fly into?

Geneva International Airport is around one hour from Chamonix; this is the best airport to fly to.

How can I get from Geneva airport to Chamonix?

Plenty of operators run a regular scheduled service into Chamonix, and private transfer providers are also plentiful. We recommend ChamExpress (www.chamexpress.com) or AlpyBus (www.alpybus.com) for low cost and regular transfers between Chamonix and Geneva Airport. Both companies allow you to book online. Please ensure you book your transfer to and from the address we provide by email, if you've not received this and you want to book your transfer please email us. During non-exceptional times, transfers cost around €30 each way. If you have a very early, or very late flight and want transfers to correspond to those times then your transfer may cost slightly more. Please ensure that you book a bike bag onto the transfer – this may incur a small surcharge. For group bookings only (5+) we are sometimes able to pick you up from the airport for at very reasonable cost. Please contact us for availability and pricing.

What is check-out time on the departure date?

Check-out from our final nights' accommodation in Chamonix is 10am on Saturday morning. If you are flying, we would recommend booking a flight that leaves in the early afternoon, this gives you plenty of time in the morning to catch your transfer, but you are also not hanging around needlessly in Chamonix. You are welcome to leave bags in the chalet, but we ask you to vacate your room and the communal areas by 10am to give our chalet staff space to clean.

Driving Directions:

You can drive to Chamonix easily; we'll provide our accommodation address by email. Please aim to arrive at our accommodation after 14:00 and before around 17:00.

Parking:

There is free parking very near to our accommodation. You are free to leave your car here for the week; we cannot take responsibility for the security of your vehicle - but any problems are rare. You can store valuables in our accommodation.

Can I get to Chamonix any other way?

Yes, there is a train station in Chamonix. SNCF is the French National Rail company and their website can help you plan your trip. <https://uk.voyages-sncf.com/en/>

Can I leave my bike bag in Chamonix?

Yes, our accommodation in Chamonix has storage space to leave your bike bags/boxes for the week.

Admin:

What insurance do I need? READ THIS!

You **must** have insurance that will cover you for rescue in a mountainous and backcountry environment in the following countries: France, Switzerland and Italy. Your insurance must also cover you for any medical costs incurred in these countries, as well as repatriation. If you have an EHIC (formerly E111) card (EU citizens), this is an easy way of proving you are entitled to reciprocal medical care, however, it does not replace insurance and certainly won't cover any rescue operation. *It is a condition of booking that you take out insurance that meets the above criteria.*

We highly recommend that everyone has travel insurance cover for extra costs and charges incurred as a result of delays, cancellations, rescheduling, repatriation or any factors outside our control.

Should I insure my bike and/or belongings?

We make every effort to ensure the security of your belongings and your bike. However, we don't under any circumstances accept responsibility for damage, loss or theft. It is up to you to ensure that you are happy with the security arrangements in place at accommodation and whilst transporting belongings, including your bike, on vehicles and other uplifts. We accept no liability for damage incurred to your bike during uplifts, either by vehicle or other mechanical means. *Please ensure that your belongings and bike are adequately insured during the trip for damage, theft and loss.*

Can I cancel or transfer my space to another week?

Due to the high costs we incur to your pre-book accommodation, guiding and transportation, your final payment becomes non-refundable 8 weeks before departure. We highly recommend that you have adequate trip cancellation insurance in place to financially cover non-attendance due to uncontrollable circumstances. Please see our Terms and Conditions of Booking for more information.

What happens if I injure myself during the week?

Your insurance policy should cover this eventuality financially. You must be insured for transport to the nearest hospital for treatment. We will help you where we can with logistics in the event of a hospital visit, however, ultimately, our trip will continue without you and you may need to rely on your insurance cover to provide onward transport to either catch up with the trip or for repatriation.

How much spending money should I bring and what currency should this be in?

Euros are used in France and Italy where we spend most of our time and every evening. We don't suggest you should worry about bringing Swiss Francs as in the few places we'll stop in Switzerland you can pay in Euros. You'll just need some money for beer/coffee/soft drinks both en-route and during the evenings. What you bring usually depends on your attitude to wine and beers! We'd suggest that €200 would be more than enough for the week.

When should I tell you about a medical condition?

In the event that you are referred to hospital by our staff we may need to pass on medical information on your behalf. It is therefore extremely important that we are aware of any medical conditions. The booking form you will complete requests this information, however, please ensure that our staff are aware of any medical conditions on the first day of the trip.

The Riding

How long are the days and how much ascending and descending is there?

We'll usually ride from around 9am to around 5pm with a lunch break. During this time we'll often cover upwards of 50km. There is an average of 700 metres of climbing each day, with much less on some days and slightly more on other days. We'll often descend in excess of 4000 metres during a day. Over the entire week we cover in the saddle, around 290km with 4000m of climbing and 25000m of descending.

How difficult is the riding?

You should be a very experienced rider, used to riding natural mountainous trails with confidence. You **do not** need to be comfortable or capable of riding “bike park” style features like jumps or drops – these man-made features are not generally found on our trips.

How fit do I need to be?

An excellent level of endurance fitness is required. You must be prepared to climb for around 500-1000metres per day. You must be prepared for long days in the mountains, sometimes with few escape options.

What kind of trails do you ride?

We ride natural trails that have formed over hundreds of years of farming activity in the European Alps. They are all footpaths and are legal to ride on. It just so happens that these trails are the perfect gradient for mountain biking.

Do you use lifts or uplifts?

Yes, our concept relies on the use of a combination of lifts and van uplift to help us with the ascending each day! Your lift passes are included in the price of the trip. See our **“The Concept”** section of our website to learn how we make use of the multiple lift networks during the week.

What will the weather be like?

Generally through the summer months in the Alps the days are hot and sunny with high pressure systems centred over the Alps for most of the summer. We occasionally get afternoon storms, which while severe are fairly short lived. There is a high temperature range, temperatures can reach 35°C in the valleys during the day, while during a storm it can snow and the temperatures can approach freezing! We can also sometimes experience several days of bad weather due to frontal weather systems, however, these systems are uncommon. It is essential to have appropriate clothing for a range of temperatures and weather conditions. Please read on for advice on the riding kit you should bring on the trip.

Is there a day off? Can I have one?

There is no day off. You are welcome to stay with our van if you do not wish to ride on any day.

Do you use qualified guides?

All our guides are experienced, qualified, first aid trained and fully insured.

What do you to ensure safety of the riders?

We operate in a friendly and relaxed manner - but behind the scenes we are a professional and insured operation, with our head office in Scotland, United Kingdom. Our trips are fully risk assessed - have pre-planned bail out options, numerous bad weather alternatives and robust late-home procedures. Our guides carry state of the art satellite tracking and 2 way communication equipment.

Kit

What bike do I need?

You need a specific type of bike to ride (and enjoy) this trip. Ideally, we would suggest a modern all-mountain (or enduro) bike with around 5”-6” of front and rear suspension. A downhill bike will be too heavy for the climbs and long days, whereas a lightweight cross country bike will be too light for the descents.

Is a hardtail okay?

We would suggest that a full suspension set-up will be a more comfortable choice for the trip. However, if you are comfortable riding a hardtail on technical, natural trails then this will be fine. The bike set-up advice applies equally to anyone riding a hardtail.

Can I bring a fat bike?

No.

Can I bring a plus sized bike?

Yes and our bike trailers can accommodate.

Can I bring a 26", 27.5" (650b) or 29" bike?

Yes, we don't care what wheel size you choose as long as it's an appropriate bike as above.

What tyres should I run?

We personally prefer a tubeless set-up, using Maxxis High Roller or Maxxis Minion tyres. The DD (Double Down) versions of Maxxis tyres have proved to be a great combination between weight, puncture resistance and durability. We always carry at least two tubes with us as tubeless repairs on the move can be time consuming or impossible. You can also run a traditional tubes set-up with any of these tyres. Go for a tyre width between 2.3-2.6". Avoid any skinny cross country tyres and super lightweight tubes, you will not have the comfort, control or puncture resistance that you'll need for this trip. Regardless of your tyre set-up please carry some form of sidewall patch.

What gear set-up shall I use?

Most riders now use a 1x set-up and it works great as its very simple and requires little maintenance. However, please avoid a huge front ring – a 34t, 32t or 30t all work well. With modern clutch rear derailleurs and narrow-wide rings, front ring chain retention is not usually required. You can also use a 2x set-up. **Bring a spare rear mech hanger.** The other option is a gearbox bike – from a manufacture such a Deviate Cycles.

Can I use my *insert exotic bike component here*?

We don't really care as long as your set-up is proven and you know how to maintain it.

SPD's or Flats?

This is a personal choice. Some of our guides clip in, others use flats. Our only comment on the subject is to kindly request that you do not arrive with SPD's unless you are 100% comfortable with them in all riding situations. This trip is not the time to learn how to ride with SPD's. If you really are unsure please contact us and we can offer further advice.

Can I hire a bike?

We maintain a small hire bike fleet of Deviate Guide Alpine Build's in Chamonix. It costs €450 to rent a Deviate Guide for this trip and that price includes your consumables. If you go onto buy a bike from Deviate within a year – you will receive €450 off the price.

Please contact us to reserve a hire bike.

What tools/workshop spares should I bring alone?

We'll provide a bike stand, track pump and a tool-box (with basic workshop tools) that will be available for use each evening. You should bring any tools that are unique to common servicing of your bike. We'll also provide DOT and Mineral Brake Fluid along with a bleed kit for Avid and Shimano Brakes.

What spare parts for my bike should I bring?

We do try and carry some essential spares in our van to get you back on the trail again. However, we can't carry specific spares and therefore **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT** that at the very least you bring, a few sets of replacement brake pads AND a couple of spare derailleur hangers. A spare rear derailleur is a good idea and perhaps a spare tyre in your baggage. We would also recommend any specific suspension linkage bolts that commonly fail on your bike. It might take a bit of effort and pre-planning to source some of these spares but this will be worth it if it keeps you on the trail.

What happens if my bike breaks beyond repair?

This is unlucky, but does happen from time to time. We'll do our best to get you up and running by getting hold of a hire bike for you. Unfortunately, we can't be held responsible for any riding you miss as a result of this event.

What riding kit should I bring? (PLEASE READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY)

You're riding for 6 days and you're unlikely to have the opportunity to do any laundry. Therefore, please bring enough riding kit for this duration of trip. In good weather, you'll probably only end up

using some of it, but in bad weather you'll be thankful of the extra items instead of having to put wet and dirty kit back on in the morning! You'll need riding shorts (we'd say at least 4 pairs) and several short sleeved riding tops (1 for each day ideally). Generally long riding pants will be too hot, however, waterproof over-trousers or waterproof shorts can be brought along if you wish in case of bad weather. Padded chamois undershorts work well, but most of our guides prefer to use normal cotton underwear – you'll want a pair of riding “underwear” for each day. A good waterproof jacket is essential. It is necessary to bring something to provide some warmth as well – we usually carry a windstopper jersey.

A helmet is required, please bring a half lid though, a full face will be too hot! Helmets with detachable chin-guards are a good option if you prefer extra protection on the descents. Knee guards are highly recommended and some riders like to use elbow guards too. Riding glasses are essential and you'll definitely want some dark lenses – some riders like to have a clear lens option or photochromic lens. Full finger gloves are recommended, get some lighter ones though, knuckle protection is all very well, but will be hot and uncomfortable. A pair of waterproof or windstopper gloves is nice when the weather is bad. You'll need a 15-20litre pack with the ability to carry at least 2 litres of water. In this pack should be a selection of spares including at least two inner tubes, good tyre levers, a pump, a puncture repair kit, a tyre sidewall repair kit (old cut up toothpaste tubes and duct tape work well), one complete front and rear set of brake pads, a spare derailleur hanger and some common bolts found on your bike. You'll want a selection of trail tools for running adjustments and repairs. We would also suggest including a couple of energy gels.

One of the most important items to bring with you is a mobile phone – reception is surprisingly good in the European Alps and there situations when a phone call can make life much easier. Please ensure before you depart that your phone will work in Europe. You can keep it turned off if you like, however, please pack it in your riding kit each day.

You should pack a camera!!

Can you list that kit for me?

- Riding Shorts (at least 3)
- Riding Tops (short sleeved, or at least long sleeved that can be rolled up)
- Chamois Liners (6)
- Good Waterproof Jacket (Goretex or similar)
- Windstopper or Warm Layer
- Waterproof over-trousers/waterproof shorts (we wouldn't bother, but no harm in bring them in case of foul weather)
- A half lid Helmet (full face with detachable chin guard also an option)
- Knee Guards (highly recommended)
- Elbow Guards (optional)
- Riding Glasses (with clear and dark lenses, or a photochromic lens)
- Full Finger Riding Gloves (we suggest a couple of pairs)
- 15-20litre Riding Pack with a 2/3litre water bladder
- Usual trail spares as discussed above
- Basic trail tools
- Energy Gels
- Mobile Phone
- Camera

What off-bike kit should I bring?

A kit bag, somewhere between 50-100litres should work. Please keep in mind we have limited capacity for kit in our van so keep it to one kit bag per person please. **Please ensure all your spare parts fit in this bag – loose boxes of spares in the van are just asking to get lost.** You'll need clothes for the evenings and some basic items to keep yourself smelling fresh! Towels are provided at all our accommodation. Any questions, fire us an e-mail.

Should I bring any body armour?

As above, we suggest everyone uses knee guards and our guides will nearly always be wearing them for the descents. Some riders feel more comfortable with elbow guards – our guides generally don't use them – however, if you are happy to carry/wear them on the climbs then bring them by all means. We don't suggest a pressure suit or a spine guard, it will be too hot.

Accommodation and Food

What accommodation will we be staying in?

We use a series of comfortable hotels along the route. These are 2*/3*, and we have made sure all the hotels we use are friendly and comfortable. All have hot showers, comfortable beds and somewhere to relax in the evenings. You will always be in either a single or double bed. You will be sharing either a twin or triple room, although we can offer single rooms for a small supplement subject to availability.

Is there WiFi?

Yes, although we kindly request that you do not use your phone/tablet at the dinner table. Some of the hotels have poor or intermittent WiFi due to their location in the mountains so please do not rely on these connections.

What is the food like?

Each hotel will provide an evening meal and breakfast. The evening meal is a fixed menu affair. This is always a 3/4 course meal. The evening meal does not include wine or any drinks, however, soft and alcoholic drinks can be purchased from the hotel bar. Breakfast is continental style. We provide packed lunch each day. This will consist of a large sandwich, crisps, a chocolate bar as well as unlimited trail mix (dried fruit, sweets) and a selection of fruit.

What happens if I don't like a meal?

If you have any dislikes please specify this on your booking form and we can inform the hotels in advance. The hotel restaurants sometimes offer you a choice of a couple of dishes. They should be able to accommodate minor changes to their menu and will often offer to replace a fixed menu dish with another dish if you don't like the set menu option.

Can you cater to specific dietary requirements?

Usually this is no problem. Please check with us if you have any specific requirements before you book. If you have not entered a specific requirement on your booking form, often the hotel will be unable to cater for this on the evening. If you notify us of an allergy or intolerance, our hotel partners will often go to great lengths to cater for you (France and Italy aren't famous for gluten or dairy free options) – and they don't appreciate it when you change your mind!!

Will there be enough food?

Yes, we have made sure that the hotels we are using will provide "mountain biker" portions and our guests are usually more than happy with the quantity of food. But it is a set meal and the food will not be unlimited. If you have specific calorific requirements, you may feel as though bringing some extra food is appropriate, for example some guests like to bring along powdered carbohydrate shakes or recovery drinks.

Can I have a room to myself?

Usually we can arrange this, please specify on your booking form. There will be a single room supplement of €30 per night.

Do you provide towels?

Yes, there is no need to bring your own towel, each hotel will provide one.

Can I wash my kit at any point during the trip?

We strongly advise you to have enough riding kit for the entire duration of your trip.